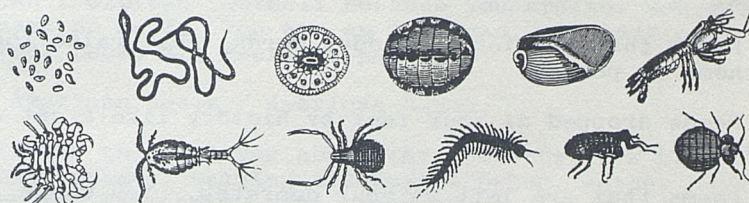


T H E W O R M W O O D R E V I E W

V O L U M E 2 6 , N U M B E R 2 , I S S U E 1 0 2

US-ISSN: 0043-9401; Editor: Marvin Malone; Art Editor:
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Press, P.O. Box 8840, Stockton CA 95208-0840, U.S.A.



A TOPOLOGY OF CONTEMPLATION

Poems, poems / poems, poems.

Poems, poems / poems, poems.

Poems you lay across ravines, spanning the rocks and
frenzied water, poems you use to cross treacherous moun-
tain streams, the ice like superstition under your feet.

Poems you are addicted to, you shoot them up, each
nuance gives you a rush; without them your cells echo in
anxiety, records you must play over and over again.

Poems that float on the wind, you ride them like
hang-gliders, quiet and easy in the thin air, you're so
high.

Poems that dribble out the side of your mouth.

Poems whose shadow you catch sight of disappearing
round the corner as you pull into the gas station, click
off when you pick up the phone.

Poems that mention forbidden subjects, as if they
referred to the Forbidden City.

Poems chanted by feral desperadoes as at night they run through Burroughs' novels, passing frisbees with razors fixed to their brim, they get accurate fast.

Poems so horrible you can't even read them let alone write them.

Barely audible poems that fall from the lips of dying heroes.

Poems that you're stuck with like your memories of Korea.

Poems that mention forbidden words, that raise topics anathema in poetry.

Poems dropped at your feet by history like a cat with a dead bird.

Poems that are left on your doorstep, you waken in the night but there's no one there, only the cars in the street, the gunshots in the park. Fuck it, stay in bed.

Poems that mention what can't be mentioned in poems, the campesino shot for showing mass graves to the journalists -- they made good news, good money.

Poems bourne on a rhetoric so thick it breaks the boughs of the trees where it comes to roost seeking quietness.

Poems that fill the interstices of your life like mine is riddled by the absence of Nona Hendrix.

Poems that hover outside your window at night, those melancholy UFOs, they want you to come out to them, but you sleep on and they have places they must go.

Intricate poems, each a tartan of textures, knitted like the greens of England, hallowed in moisture, the thick sky guards them and keeps each precise.

Poems that you use to store the memories you accumulate. I don't want memories which is why I live in this white sphere, it keeps my time uninflected, ensures that nothing will happen, the pure remain pure, the pages stay clean and all poems erased.

Poems, poems / Poems, poems

Poems that clutch at your throat, that kneel on your chest and draw out your youth, cancel your first love, the first kisses on the riverbank, first nipple in your teeth.

Poems so sick with rage and despair they slit their own throats.

Poems that write you, that speak you, that say you are not you, you are only your time.

Poems that are ragged, unfinished, full of bad lines.

Poems that mix levels of language you can't handle. You can't get a grip, take a stand, know what you think, think what you know, say what you mean, mean what you say. You can't express yourself because you are not yourself. You have no self. You are an American. An American. And your poems are American poems.

American poems / American poems.

Poems that ask you about America, that ask about American policy, baiting the Soviet Union, Mother Russia. What poems are these? Who wrote them? Are these your poems? Is it your policy? Do these foreign poems let you sleep at night?

Poems that vomit, that vomit.

Poems that hang like fire-escapes on the tenements of your mind. You left them there, you left these rooms unoccupied.

Poems that litter the floor of abandoned rooms. They take their place next to soup cans and wine bottles, the newspapers they sleep on and the bodies of poets dead from the cold.

Poems that have decided it's best to be silent. All you're left with is poems that slam shut like elevator doors, that snap at your wrists like the jaws on a thin dog, that give you the eye like a pimp at the bus station and then swing round on you like a friend who got a better cut somewhere else when you thought you needed them most. You don't. You have no need. In these poems you need nothing.

They are enough. Nothing is always enough and these poems are nothing. They can change crap into intelligence and vice-versa, display their own virtuosity and then moan like Mingus blues.

They'll break off and start quoting Blake's AMERICA, how the earth had lost another portion of the infinite. Oh America, bitter land.

So they adopt a conservative stance, puking, endlessly puking -- this the negation, this the despair.

Poems so sick, they slit their own throats.

Poems that spread their legs or the cheeks of their ass. But they stink so horribly you won't even come close. They look you in the eye and tell you to fuck off then, if you don't want it there's plenty that do.

Poems that are enraged, ragged, unfinished, obsession-al, full of bad lines.

Rejected poems, used up poems, cast off poems. Poems that will only just run. Their doors are tied with string and you only put fifty cents of gas in them, but they'll burn it, these poems will burn it.

Because they already burn with the crisis of their history. They don't like who they are. They'd really rather be punk poems or post-punk poems or language poems or any kind of poems but these: party poems, sixties' revival poems, MOR poems or neo-expressionist poems. They'd really like to stand around posing or buying real estate, anything but this, finding themselves asking what poems are not allowed to ask, saying what they were not paid to say, what they were paid not to say.

At last they have asked about Aztlan: about Cuba, about El Salvador, about Nicaragua.

They say: You at last catch our eye and our ear and allow us a poem, a poem, a poem that can turn around and quietly say:

Venceremos, the People Will Win.

-- David James

Los Angeles CA

WRAP

I start with nothing. I always start out that way. Nothing! A void. I make it absolutely clear. My technique is to wrap in cellophane. Layer after layer of cellophane. Enclosing a void. Nothing! To achieve the effect's never easy, since cellophane, viewed from an angle under harsh museum lighting, throws off a glint. Glints distract. I feel that in myself I have a duty to end distraction, confusion and hoopla. Finding an appropriate